



U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Washington, DC 20515

James L. Oberstar
Chairman

John L. Mica
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November 19, 2009

James W. Coon II, Republican Chief of Staff

The Honorable Calvin L. Scovel, III
Inspector General
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
West Building - W70-300
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Inspector General Scovel:

Maintaining and modernizing the National Airspace System must be a national priority. The communications and system failures on November 19, 2009, which grounded thousands of travelers and delayed hundreds of flights nationwide, is a sobering reminder of the urgent need to update the equipment air traffic controllers rely on to manage air traffic.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is working to pinpoint the root cause of the problem. It appears that the problem is traceable to failures with the FAA's main telecommunications network, commonly referred to as the FAA Telecommunications Infrastructure (FTI) Program. This system is not owned or operated by the Federal Government.

Given the recent outage and its cascading effects, we request that your office undertake a 60-day study to examine the causes of the problem and whether FAA's corrective action plan will prevent future problems. Also, we ask that you examine FAA's ability to conduct oversight of FTI and the implications for other critical modernization systems that will not be owned or operated by the Federal Government, such as the FAA's Automatic Dependent Surveillance - Broadcast satellite-based surveillance system.

Sincerely,

James L. Oberstar
Chairman, Committee on
Transportation and Infrastructure

Jerry F. Costello
Chairman
Subcommittee on Aviation